

Let's assume the set has already been built, painted and/or wallpapered, dado rail and picture rail stuck on etc, I would assemble it completely in the workshop **exactly** as it will be built on stage for the performance. This exactness is important. Make sure the flats join, overlap, butt, hinge, as they will "on the night", otherwise you are going to be left with clean sections where the flats are joined differently next time.

I would then take an old rag, moisten it, and then dip it slightly in some dark brown paint. Don't overdo the amount of paint as you are going to build up the "dirt" in layers - adding layers as each dries out as required. Making the darkest part right in the corner.

I would most certainly scrub this colour along all the top edges of the flats. I do this in any case even in spanking new "rooms" as it helps to 'feather' the top edges into the darkness of the stage. The audience (and cast) are rarely aware of this trick but it helps to give the set a 'lived in' look.

Time for a rough sketch.



Now it is a question of making areas grubby. We are really talking here of what gets worn in the everyday use of a room. Let's assume the set is more or less as I have sketched it. Then here's where I would scrub my brown. Note I keep using the word "scrub" rather than paint as I am aiming to put a layer of transparent dirt on the flats: -

- First of all I would attack all the internal corners. I would end up with grubbiness encroaching at the max. about 6 inches into the flats each way. And as I said before - if you haven't got your flats joining as they will on stage then, when you take them apart to move to the theatre, you might end up with a clean line visible.
- HINT Take your rag and paint with you when setting up on stage.
- Now I would put some 'grubbiness' on some of the external corners where people have

rubbed past (i.e. not above shoulder height). Our cat is inclined to mark external corners by continuously rubbing against them! All this grubbiness is done subtly. Build up the colour a little at a time. .

- Then starting from the left going around my conjectural sketch: -
 - Around the light switch, (People keep groping for this in the dark and missing)
 - Around the door handle, (ditto above)
 - Beneath coat hangers where old, unclean, jackets have been hung,
 - Above radiators (heat)
 - Below radiators (water stain?)
 - Water stain below pipes coming from the back boiler? (Not in sketch)
 - Stick a piece of square cardboard where a picture would have hung, then slightly stain the area around it. Take the cardboard away and you are left with the impression that a picture used to hang there.
 - Above the fireplace (Soot)
 - And where a chair used to rub against a wall.
 - And where people have lent back against a wall whilst sitting in a chair. (Not in sketch)